

Message Text

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FOR IOR/M, IPS, IBS, CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUB: EDITORIAL IN INFLUENTIAL CANBERRA TIMES FRIDAY, MARCH 7,
HEADED "STRUGGLE FOR CANBODIA"

WHAT TRANSCENDS THE BITTER HATREDS, THE CLASH OF IDEOLOGIES,
THE OFFICIAL CORRUPTION AND THE GREED FOR POLITICAL POWER
THAT SIMMER IN THE CAULDDRON OF CAMBODIA IS THE LOSS OF ABOUT
700,000 LIVES IN FIVE YEARS, THE GRINDING HARDSHIPS AND POVERTY
OF THE POPULATION OF THE CAPITAL, PHNOM PENH, AND THE HALF-
MILLION REFUGEES IT CONTAINS, AND THE DEVASTATION OF A FORMERLY
BEAUTIFUL AND RELATIVELY PEACEFUL COUNTRY. SURPRISINGLY, THE
INSANE CRUELITIES OF THE WAR IN INDO-CHINA NO LONGER SEEM TO
MATTER TO THOSE WHO NOT SO LONG AGO ACCUSED THE AMERICAN
"IMPERIALISTS" OF MASSACRING INNOCENT POPULATIONS.

MOST OF THE COUNTRY IS NOW UNDER THE CONTROL OF INSURGENT FOR-
CES LOOSELY DESCRIBED AS COMMUNISTS AND KHMER ROUGHE. THE REBEL
FORCES WOE MUCH TO THEIR ORGANISATIONAL AND MILITARY COHESION
TO NORTH VIETNAMESE SUPPORT. THEIR MILITARY SUPPLIES COME FROM
THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA AND THEY LIVE OFF THE COUNTRYSIDE.
THE INSURGENTS CONTAIN TWO IDENTIFIABLE SEPARATE FACTIONS,
LTHE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF THE KHMER NATIONAL UNION, OSTENSIBLY
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HEADED BY PRINCE SIHANOUK, THE FORMER HEAD OF THE CAMBODIAN

GOVERNMENT OUSTED BY THE ARMY IN 1970 AND NOW LIVING AS AN HONoured GUEST OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT, AND THE KHMER ROUGE ITSELF, A GROUPING OF COMMUNISTS AND ANTI-COMMUNISTS LINKED IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE RULING REGIME OF GENERAL LON NOL. PHNOM PENH IS ENCIRCLED, COMPLETELY CUT OFF SAVE FOR POCH-ENTONG AIRPORT SUPPLIED BY THE AMERICAN AIRLIFT, AND IN THE ESTIMATION OF ALL OBSERVERS SLOWLY BUT SURELY DYING OF STRANGULATION. NEGOTIATIONS AN ILLUSION

THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT, FOR REASONS OF INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY AND NATIONAL HONOUR THAT MAKE LITTLE IMPRESSION ON CONGRESS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, IS DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN AND INCREASE THE PRESENT FLOW OF FUEL, AMMUNITION AND FOOD TO THE CAPITAL IN THE HOPE THAT THE COMMUNISTS WILL AT LAST HAVE TO AGREE TO NEGOTIATE FOR PEACE. IN PRACTICAL TERMS THIS HOPE IS ILLUSORY AND IT SEEMS THA THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOME WOULD BE FOR THE WAR TO COME TO A SWIFT END AND FOR THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS ACCUSED OF CORRUPTION AND INCOMPETENCE, TO COLLAPSE. AT LEAST THE KILLING WOULD THEN STOP, THOUGH POLITICAL FUEDING AND SOME VIOLENCE WOULD CONTINUE, AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY COULD POUR IN SUPPLIES TO RELIEVE THE LONG-SUFFERING CAMBODIAN PEOPLE.

THE END OF THE HOSTILITIES WOULD BECOME A VICORY FOR THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, WHO STAND GUILTY OF AGRESSION AGAINST CAMBODIA, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT OUTSIDE INTERVENTION, 0-458:- ULARLY BY ALIEN WHITE PEOPLE FAR REMOVED FROM THE ISSUES THAT HAVE SET THE PEOPLES OF INDO-CHINA AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS, CANNOT RESTORE PEACE TO THEM. THE RISK OF BEING HELD UP SIMPLY AS THE SUPPORTERS OF A DISCREDITED REGIME IS ENOUGH REASON FOR THE AMERICANS TO WITHDRAW THEIR SUPPLIES OF MILITARY HARDWARE WHILE CONTINUING TO FERRY IN FOOD FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS. THE AMERICANS' REPEATED BUT UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO BRING THE WARRING PARTIES TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE AND DR. KISSINGER'S RECENT APPEAL TO CHINA TO USE ITS INFLUENCE IN THIS DIRECTION ARE SUFFICIENT PROOF OF THEIR CONCERN FOR AN ALLY.

THE IMMINENT FALL OF PHNOM PENH AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS
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FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT THIEU IN SIAGON WILL BE POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE TO AUSTRALIA'S LABOR GOVERNMENT, WHOSE SYMPATHIES IN INDO-CHINA GO TO THE COMMUNISTS. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS APART, HOWEVER, THE COMPASSIONATE INSTINCTS OF LABOR FOR THE UNDER-PRIVILEGED WILL HAVE AMPLE SCOPE IN THE MOUNTING OF A RESCUE OPERATION TO HELP THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE ONCE THE ROCKET ATTACKS ON THE CAPITAL HAVE CEASED. THE LIVES OF MANY SUPPORTERS OF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST FORCES WILL BE

IN DANGER AND NUMBERS OF HUMBLE REFUGEES WHO ARE NOT PRE-
PARED TO SUBMIT TO COMMUNIST DOMINATION WILL SEEK ASYLUM
ELSEWHERE. IT WILL THEN BE TIME FOR AUSTRALIA TO SHOW TO
THE ASIAN PEOPLES OF THE NORTH THAT IT CAN BE A REAL FRIEND
IN TIME OF NEED.
PETTUS

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